



News & Events

University News & Information

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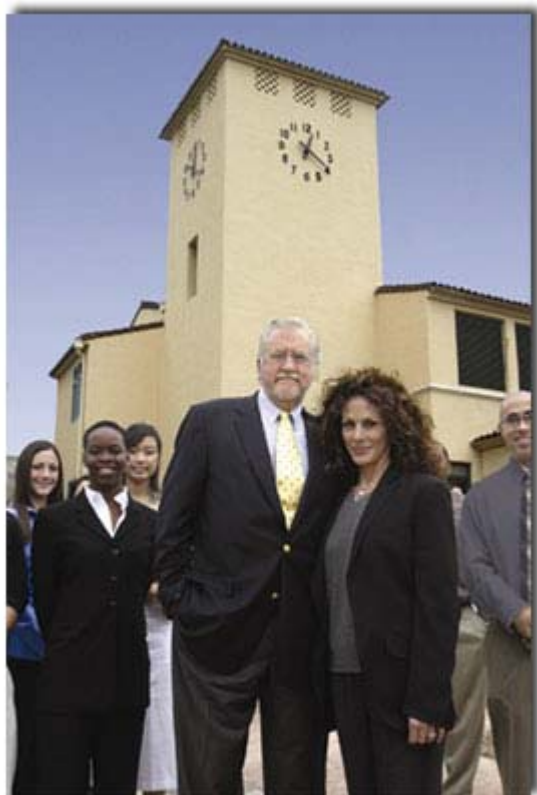
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Former Graduate and Cal Poly Launch Initiative to Help Ease Critical Shortage of Math and Science Teachers in Low-Income Areas

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- One of the nation's foremost trial attorneys, Joseph Cotchett, and his wife, Victoria, have pledged \$7 million to California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) to launch a model program to put more math and science teachers in classrooms in low-income neighborhoods.



This program, a unique public-private partnership which will be administered by Cal Poly's University Center for Teacher Education (UCTE), is being announced today at naming ceremonies for the Cotchett Education Building on the Cal Poly campus.

Cotchett, described by USA Today as "a legend in legal circles," grew up in New York and received his Engineering degree from Cal Poly. Victoria received her degree from a California State University. Together they have championed the rights of the underdog.

"We need to focus on the future. We need to drive improvements in math and science curriculum and instruction,

particularly for underprivileged students," the Cotchetts said. "We want young students to excel in math and science so that they may continue to make advancements in medicine, academia and industry – and at the same time become full members of our society."

The Cotchetts are concerned that California students score at or near the bottom on standardized test scores in math and science.

To compound the problem, students in schools with large minority populations are five times as likely to face under-prepared teachers as students in schools with low percentages of minority students, according to The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (CFTL), located in Santa Cruz.

Additionally, low-income students are nearly three times as likely to have under prepared teachers as students in more affluent areas. Throughout California, 27 percent of these under-prepared teachers are math and science teachers, according to the CFTL.

The Cotchetts believe that at the heart of the matter is teaching. "Every child deserves to learn from a credentialed teacher, one who will inspire a lifetime of learning," Joe Cotchett said.

Victoria Cotchett has taught new immigrants to our country and feels strongly that well-prepared teachers are the key to fixing the state's education woes, especially in math and science, areas which are critical for students who want to join the state's high-tech work force.

State education and business leaders praised the initiative.

"The Cal Poly-Cotchett Initiative is providing a great service to California by addressing the need for qualified math and science teachers in our most challenged schools," said Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. "It is heartening to see innovative public-private partnerships helping us to move forward with the progress our schools have been making, even in tight budget times."

William H. Swanson, Chairman and CEO of Raytheon Company and also a Cal Poly alumnus, agreed. "I applaud the exciting Cotchett-Cal Poly partnership because it will open doors for students to science and math, and provide Raytheon and other technology companies with wonderful new engineering talent," he said.

"This generous grant will provide tremendous support for math and science achievement which is the lifeblood of engineering and of technology companies like Raytheon. I believe this is a great day for California, for technology companies like Raytheon, and for students who will now have more opportunity to use science, math and engineering as stepping-stones to their dreams," Swanson added.

Cal Poly estimates the new Cotchett programs will not only reach more than 350 teachers – and by extension thousands of students in the state's most under served areas over the next five years – but it will also develop a model other universities may draw on in their efforts to meet the state's science and technology work force supply needs.

The Cotchett gift will enable the University Center for Teacher Education, in collaboration with the College of Science and Mathematics and the College of Liberal Arts, to produce more teachers credentialed in science and mathematics and place them in low-income area schools.

This Cotchett-Cal Poly initiative includes the following components:

- The Cotchett Fellows Program will provide stipends during the credential year at Cal Poly for math and science teachers who

commit to serve in low-income areas for two years. The stipend will continue through the first two years of teaching.

- The Summer Institute will provide intensive professional development programs for teachers from high-poverty areas statewide to update knowledge and skills in math and science education. It will include a stipend, room and board.
- Scholarships will provide support during the credential year at Cal Poly for students who plan to become K-8 or secondary math and science teachers.
- The Cotchett Endowed Professorship in Science and Mathematics Teacher Education will provide leadership in the development of science and math teacher education curricula and programs, build partnerships with schools for pre-service and in-service initiatives, and create a new math-science teacher education model lab classroom.

Commenting on the Cotchett's gift, Cal Poly President, Warren J. Baker said, "Joe and Victoria Cotchett have recognized one of California's and the nation's most critical issues, educating our diverse population of children and young people to regain worldwide leadership in science and mathematics."

Baker added, "The Cotchett gift is special. Not only is it the largest pledge from an alumnus to our Centennial Fundraising Campaign, but it took us over our \$225 million goal well ahead of our December 2004 campaign end. As we struggle with state budget cuts, private donations are helping more than ever to preserve our margin of excellence."

UCTE Dean Bonnie Konopak will coordinate these programs. "Private donations such as the Cotchett's gift enable us to develop innovative, model programs. We look forward to making a difference in the communities where our students will teach, as well as serving as a model program for other universities," she said.

In honor of the Cotchett's gift, the university has renamed its landmark "clock tower" building the Cotchett Education Building, she said.

About Joe and Victoria Cotchett

The Cotchett's are active in numerous charitable organizations involving children, women, minorities and animal protection. A 1960 graduate of Cal Poly, Joe Cotchett, of Cotchett, Pitre, Simon and McCarthy in Burlingame, is a champion for the underdog in the courtroom before juries. In recent years he also has been a champion for corporate reform as part of lawsuits resulting from major financial scandals.

For the past decade the National Law Journal has named him one of the 100 most influential attorneys in the country. He is probably best known for winning a \$3.5 billion jury verdict for elderly plaintiffs bilked out of their savings in the Charles Keating-Lincoln Savings & Loan financial fiasco, the landmark case coming out the savings & loan scandal of the 1980s.

Victoria Cotchett is an artist and author of the books "The Aesthete's Guide to London Museums" and "Art in Japan." She holds a bachelor's degree in art history from California State University Hayward, has written for numerous art journals, and has worked in the field. She has been very active in animal groups over the years.

About the University Center for Teacher Education (UCTE)

The University Center for Teacher Education (UCTE) has its own core faculty, as well as associated educators and advisors from Cal Poly's colleges of Science and Mathematics, Agriculture, and Liberal Arts.

The Center offers a comprehensive and multidisciplinary set of programs and activities, from undergraduate blended programs through post-baccalaureate credential programs and masters' degrees.

Recently, the UCTE began offering Cal Poly's first doctoral program, and a new summers-only master's program is being developed. It will provide advanced professional development in science and math education.

Click [Here](#) for more facts on the Cotchett-Cal Poly Initiative

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